

Michael F. Easley
Governor



State of North Carolina Office of the Governor

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GOV. EASLEY URGES COLUMBUS COUNTY TORNADO VICTIMS TO ASK FOR HELP

RALEIGH – Gov. Mike Easley today said 18 families from Columbus County sought assistance from the state this weekend to begin recovering from the tornado that devastated the Riegelwood community last week and encouraged others with damage from the storm to apply for help. Easley approved a state disaster declaration on Friday, making grants available to help with items such as home repairs and funeral expenses.

“The state is moving quickly to help the families get the assistance they need to help rebuild their lives,” Easley said. “While we cannot heal their emotional hurt, we can help them with housing and other essential needs.”

The state has identified 49 families affected by the storm. Outreach teams of local, state and federal officials are working with the 31 families who have not yet applied for aid.

The governor’s action on Friday makes the residents eligible for the state’s individual assistance disaster aid program. Home owners can get grants of up to \$28,200 to pay for real and personal property damages; renters are eligible for compensation for personal property damages as well. Grants pay for funeral expenses up to \$7,600 for those who lost family members. Funds are also available to cover medical expenses not covered by insurance.

“We do not want worries over the cost of medical care to drive the decision for those who need treatment,” Easley said. “They should get the medical care they need and the state will cover the cost.”

Also on Friday, the governor requested and received a U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) disaster declaration that makes low interest loans available for repairs. The SBA, the American Red Cross and North Carolina Emergency Management staff handling the state disaster applications are all located at the Riegelwood Baptist Church on 103 Highway 87 North. The application center is open from 9:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. today through Wednesday, and will be open later in the week if needed.

Citizens can also call toll-free at 1-800-659-2955 to apply for an SBA loan or contact the American Red Cross at 1-866-343-5864. At this time, there do not appear to be any families in need of temporary housing.

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